

Exodus 31 - Thursday, May 14th, 2009

- In chapter 31, we sort of round a corner and go from priestly ministry to practical service, as it relates to the building of the Tabernacle.
- While this may be a short chapter, it is a very encouraging chapter because of both the implication for us, and the application to us.

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 3 And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, 4 to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, 5 in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship.

- The Lord is telling Moses that He has specifically called, by name, Bezalel, who is not from the priestly tribe, to do the artistic design.
- What's so interesting is that God fills Bezalel with the Spirit, "in wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all manner of workmanship.
- God is calling, gifting, enabling, and empowering him to design art work in gold, silver, bronze, jewels and wood for the Tabernacle.

- You get the sense that this service for the Lord on the Tabernacle is as necessary as the priestly service for the Lord in the Tabernacle.
- There is much here in the way of practical application for all of us because we're all prone to put a wall between the clergy and laity.

"I'm against the idea of putting the "big preachers" on tape and playing them back to the congregations that feel they are being starved by listening to "little preachers." Fallacy, brethren--a thousand times, fallacy! If we could have the Apostle Paul on tape recordings and let him stand here and preach, he could do no more for you than the Holy Ghost can do, with The Book and the human conscience.... Oh, brethren, I would not detract from God's great men, but I can safely say that that's not what the church needs."

A.W. Tozer "The Tozer Pulpit," Volume 1, pp. 108-109

6 "And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you: 7 the tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furniture of the tabernacle --8 the table and its utensils, the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, 9 the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base -- 10 the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy place. According to all that I have commanded you they shall do."

- Here, it gets even more interesting and practical. God is both appointing and anointing Aholiab to be Bezaleel's assistant of sorts.
- In addition to this, the Lord tells Moses that He has put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, so they can build the Tabernacle.
- This is one of those details in the Bible where I believe the information in the text is recorded for us to see the application from the text.

Romaine, as he was known, was Pastor Chuck Smith's assistant pastor, at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, for over 30 years. He has since, went home to be with the Lord, but not before writing a small booklet titled "Second." It is a must read for anyone who serves in any capacity in the ministry, and especially those in an assisting role as a "second."

"There are those who are appointed to labor in that place in the body called "The Shade." They are not out where everyone can see them; they serve in a secondary role. To keep the church moving in power, we need both up front and behind the scenes servants of God. These men that labor in the shade produce fruit that shall be richly accounted to them at the time of Christ."

L. E. Romaine "Second" p. 23

I would like to quote from an article written by G.D. Watson, (1845-1924), who was a Wesleyan Methodist Minister and Evangelist in Los Angeles, which speaks ever so eloquently to this topic:

"The Lord may let others be honored and keep you hidden and unappreciated because He wants to produce some choice, fragrant fruit for His coming glory, which can only be produced in the shade. He may let others do a work for Him and get the credit for it, but He will make you work on and on without others knowing how much you are doing; and then, to make your work still more precious, He may let others get the credit for the work which you have done, and thus make your reward ten times greater when Jesus comes."

G.D. Watson

12 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 13 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. 14 You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. 16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. 17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'"

- At first glance, this really seems out of place. Why would God go from telling Moses about the work of the Tabernacle to the Sabbath?
- Also, why was the profaning of the Sabbath by the working on the Sabbath so serious that it was to be punishable by death?
- I believe there are a number of reasons for this, and I would like to take a little bit of time to look closer at this and how it applies to us.

- It's not my intention tonight to revisit all of the reasons why Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, is not for us today under the New Covenant.
- If you would be interested, you can acquire the study we did back on January 29th in Exodus 20:8-11 which is the fourth commandment.
- That being said, I think that we would be grossly remiss to not study and understand this, because of its application to us today.

- To do this, we'll look at two aspects of this command that is given to Moses on the heels of the instructions for building the Tabernacle.
- The first aspect is; "why this was so serious for Israel back then," and the second is; "why this is so important for us now."

- Why was this so serious for them back then?
 1. It was a reminder of God's covenant with Israel.
 2. It was a sign between God and Israel that God created the world in six days.
 3. It was a sign for Israel, pointing them to the person of Jesus Christ.

- Why is this so important for us now?
 1. It reminds us of the New Covenant for the church.
 2. It points me to the finished work on the cross.
 3. It prioritizes my work for the Lord.

- It is this third one, as it relates to the work "for" the Lord, in light of the work "of" the Lord that I would like to focus our attention on.
- See, when Moses comes down from Mt. Sinai, the Israelites will have an enormous amount of work to do in building this Tabernacle.
- The Sabbath rest was God's way of saying that; "the finished work 'of' the Lord should never be eclipsed by our work 'for' the Lord."

"The difference between what Jesus has done for us and what we do for Him is like the difference between the sun and the moon - yet, sometimes the moon can eclipse the sun. Some Christians live in a constant state of total eclipse!"

David Guzik, Calvary Chapel Siegen Germany

- What happens is; burnout will usually follow when the work for the Lord takes priority and is supreme over the finished work of the Lord.
- God's command to rest on the Sabbath after giving them all this "work" to do would have required that they keep their priorities in order.
- God wired us and He knows us. He knows that we're prone to put the onus on us, and in so doing, we think that it all depends on us.

- Remember, the Tabernacle was "the Tent of Meeting." It's where God could be with them and even sup with them; and them with Him.
- To always work and be too busy to enter into the Sabbath rest in the Lord would have defeated the whole purpose of the Tabernacle.
- Simply put, God wants us to rest in Him, have time with Him, and enjoy our worship of Him. If we don't do this, we will burnout!

- One pastor said it well when he wrote; "Jesus said, 'Come apart and rest awhile,' If you don't rest awhile, you'll soon come apart!"
- At the risk of an oversimplification, the way to avoid burnout, or get out of burnout is to get alone with the Lord and "rest awhile."

- I think of Elijah; he was physically fatigued after running 25 miles from Mt. Carmel to the entrance of Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46).
- He was emotionally exhausted and in such despair that he just wanted to die, and actually even prays that the Lord will take his life.

1 Kings 19:4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." NIV

- Then, a few verses later, we see Elijah spiritually burned out when he tells the Lord that everything is now on him and him alone.

1 Kings 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. KJV

- So, how did God deal with Elijah? He fired him! No, when he was alone with God, he received rest, nourishment and strength from God.
- If you feel like Elijah here tonight, I want to encourage you to get alone with the Lord and spend some time with Him in 1 Kings 19.
- Leave "Martha's kitchen" where you're working so hard for the Lord and, like Mary, sit at the feet of the Lord and let Him minister to you.

- Again, this is the "why" behind the "what" of God's command to Moses to rest. It had application both prophetically and practically.

18 And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

- We now come to the end of chapter 31, and with that we also come to the end of God speaking with Moses on Mt. Sinai.
- God gives Moses the two tablets of the Testimony, which are the Ten Commandments, written with the finger of God.
- Moses will now make his way down the mountain where he has been forty days and forty nights, only to meet a golden calf.